

## CITY COUNCIL

In January 1996, the City of Reading made the transition from the Commission Form of Government to a Strong Mayor/Council Form of the Home Rule Charter. The new form of Government was approved by voter referendum on November 7, 1993.

City Council's powers are defined in Article II of the City Charter and in Article I – Powers of the City, Section 103 – Exercise of Powers that states *“All powers of the City shall be excercised as provided by this Charter, or if the Charter makes no provision, as provided by ordinances and resolutions of the Council.”* City Council sets policy to provide for the exercise of all duties and obligations imposed upon the City by the Home Rule Charter and applicable State and Federal laws and to secure the general health, safety and welfare of the City and its citizens. The Council adopts resolutions and enacts ordinances necessary to execute any of the City's powers.

Under the Home Rule Charter, the City of Reading is divided into six districts, with each district electing one Council member. District-elected Council members are to represent the voice of their constituents and are to act as a body to make decisions in the best interest of the entire City. The President of Council is elected at-large. The President of Council is the presiding officer of Council and has the same voting powers as the other six Council members. The President interacts with the Mayor and other governmental entities and represents the voice of Council.

City Council assembles for regular public business meetings on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 7:00 P.M. in City Council chambers. City Council holds work sessions to allow free dialogue on policy, legislative matters, and other City business issues on the third Monday of each month in the Penn Room at 7:00 P.M.

In 1998, City Council elected to use the Committee structure. The Administrative Code provides for six Council Committees. Council currently operates with four committees ... Finance, Public Works, Public Safety, and Administrative Oversight. The committee setting allows members to more closely explore City issues and successfully work towards mutual goals. Each Committee meets on a Monday, one time per month. Committees may also meet more frequently when necessary. Three Council members serve on each committee. The President of Council is an ad hoc member. These Committee meetings are advertised and open to the public.

The City Council elects among itself a Vice President, appoints a City Clerk and members of City Boards as specified by the Home Rule Charter and the Third Class City Code. The City Council also approves the Mayor's appointments of the Managing Director, Department Directors, and Boards, Authorities, and Commissions as specified by the Home Rule Charter and the Third Class City Code. Council is also required to approve the salaries of the Department Director's by ordinance.

When the Home Rule form of government began in 1996, Council received administrative support from the City Clerk's Office. In addition to general administrative support the Clerk's Office assisted Council with the drafting of legislation, legal research, public relations...generally serving both as City Clerk and as Chief of Staff to Council. After evaluating

the needs of the seven member Council and the staffing of other Council offices, Council moved to create two additional support positions – a Deputy City Clerk and an Administrative Assistant.

Council established the Charter Review Commission (CRC) in November of 2001, a group of 12 to review the Charter and make recommendations on amendments to the Charter. The City of Reading Home Rule Charter mandates that the CRC must report to Council and the Mayor within 6 months of their formation. This group returned a report suggesting two amendments. The first amendment proposed changing the Strong Mayor/Part-Time Council government structure with a Manager/Council structure. The second amendment proposed the creation of a Transition Committee and a Charter Review Board that would assist the Administration and Council with interpretations on gray areas of the Charter. The amendments went on the General Election Ballot in November 2002. Only the second amendment was approved by the voters.

A major goal of the City Council is to enact responsible legislation for the prudent and ethical operation of the City Government, to assist in the planning of the City's revitalization and future, and to maintain free and open discussions with the City Administration and City residents to ensure democracy and good government for the City of Reading, Pennsylvania.

## **FY 2005 PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **GOAL 1:        SUPPORT COMMUNITY GROUPS**

- Objective 1:        Currently the City has approximately 21 functioning Community Groups. The Council Office began providing assistance to groups in the Southeast, Southwest and Northeast in 2002. The effort to encourage the continuation and growth of these groups will continue. FY 2000-2005.
- Objective 2:        Form Steering Group composed of one or two members from each of the six Council District groups. Representatives will discuss problems and recommendations from each of the six districts and report to Council. FY 2006-7.

### **GOAL 2:        REESTABLISH COUNCIL ACTION PLAN**

- Objective 1:        Redraft the Council Action Plan using plans from prior years, budget goals of the Administrative Departments and new priorities set by Council. FY 2005-6.
- Objective 2:        Form Action Groups to assist in the implementation of the issues identified.

FY 2006 - ongoing

**GOAL 3:        IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

- Objective 1:     Adoption of the City's Comprehensive Plan, outlining five main themes - FY 2000  
                      *Fiscal Health of the City of Reading*  
                      *Crime and Perception of the City of Reading*  
                      *Reinvigoration of Neighborhoods and Stabilization of Housing Stock*  
                      *Protection and Enhancement of Quality of Life*  
                      *Regionalization of Services*
- Objective 2:     Planning Commission to define Strategic Action Plan, outlining and prioritizing the recommendations made in the Comprehensive Plan and prepare Official Map. FY 2006
- Objective 3:     Review and Refinement by the Mayor, Managing Director and Council FY 2006
- Objective 4:     Council adoption of finalized Official Map and Strategic Action Plan by joint resolution with the Mayor FY 2006
- Objective 5:     Incorporation of Strategic Action Plan into Council Action Plan and make assignments to Action Groups FY 2006.

**GOAL 3:        CRIME CONTROL**

- Objective 1:     Continue to support the expansion of Community Policing Program and the creation of a Crime Commission. FY 2006 - ongoing
- Objective 2:     Review feasibility of the creation of a Public Safety & Crime Commission that will be composed of a minimum of Police representative, three members of community planning groups and three Reading residents. Members will be appointed by Council will be provided with training at the Citizen's Police Academy and must be free of political connection and affiliation. FY 2006
- Objective 3:     Assist the Commission and Police Department in implementing strategies that will benefit the department's ability to address disorder, crime and drug issues, and will encourage overall citizen interaction with Community Groups and the Police Department. FY 2006
- Objective 4:     Provide continual update to Citizens through Community Group Meetings, City Newsletter, BCTV Programs, Town Meetings, etc and encourage public education and participation in Crime Watch programs, Citizen Police Academy

and Community Policing efforts. FY- 2006

**GOAL 4: STAFFING OF CITY COUNCIL OFFICES**

- Objective 1: Research the organization of City Council offices and the duties of the City Clerk position in Pennsylvania and nationally. FY 1997-2000 – Complete.
- Objective 2: Evaluate of the support needs of the seven member part-time Council functionality of the existing staff organization. FY 1997- 2000 - Complete.
- Objective 3: Implement and budget for reorganized office staff and draft job descriptions to separate the policy and support needs of the elected Council from the administrative requirements of the City Clerk and improve the overall service provided by the Clerk and Council offices to the Administration, the public and City Council. FY 2000- 2001 – Complete.
- Objective 4: Advertisement and hiring of support staff. FY 2005
- Objective 5: Continue to evaluate and improve services provided by offices under the authority of Council. FY 2006 ongoing

**GOAL 5: MARKETING READING**

- Objective 1: Establish a Marketing Council, composed of City, School District, County and the private sector entities to develop a coordinated marketing effort that joins and expands the marketing initiatives currently used by the aforementioned to make all the marketing pieces currently used by individual entities work together. FY 2006.
- Objective 2: Assist the Administration and Marketing Council in the implementation of new marketing initiatives through the Action Groups and Council Committees. FY 2006 – 2007.
- Objective 3: Create a Downtown Revitalization Plan that will support the Sovereign Center and Performing Arts Center by restoring retail and service businesses that support the downtown workforce and provide evening activity – shopping, dining, entertainment and the arts. FY 2006-2007
- Objective 4: Provide the following additional initiatives:
- ☞ Create Welcome Packet to be issued upon the purchase of a City property; to include fact sheet on City services & programs and list of important City phone numbers
  - ☞ Develop quarterly newsletter for Reading residents –Continuation of and upgrade to City of Reading web page - *in progress*
  - ☞ Continue to develop, coordinate and improve programming on the BCTV

MAC Channel – *in progress*

- ☞ Develop incentive program to encourage City residency for all City employees

| Expenditures | 2004 Actual | 2005 Budget | 2006 Budget |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Personnel    | 145,878     | 177,136     | 263,108     |
| Operating    | 68,732      | 57,500      | 69,000      |